SOME DIFFICULTIES PROPOSED FOR SOLUTION:

IN A

LETTER

TO THE

REV. JOHN MURRAY,

CONCERNING HIS

DISCOURSE ON THE ORIGIN OF EVIL.

WITH SOME

ADDITIONAL REMARKS.

BY AN IMPARTIAL INQUIRER.

As a man is accountable only for the uſe of his OWN underſtanding, not for that of other men's; conſequently, his ſafety conſiſts, not in giving up his OWN to the direction and control of OTHERS, but in uſing it himſelf to the beſt advantage. If he follows the judgment of other men, though ever ſo wiſe and learned, contrary to his own ſenſe of things, he may, perchance, PROFESS what is RIGHT, but he DOES what is WRONG. FURNEAUX.

They have choſen their own ways. JEHOVAH.

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PREFACE.

As we muſt all give account to God for our faith and practice, and each one for himſelf, it becomes the indiſpenſable obligation of every one to improve his own underſtanding in ſearch after truth; and not to yield an implicit faith to the ſayſo *of another, however venerable and great.*

The letter contained in the following ſheets was written without any deſign to make it publick from the preſs: But Mr. Murray was pleaſed to decline giving an anſwer in the private way which I preferred; and I had too good an opinion of his candour, ingenuity, and regard for religion, to think he diſdained to anſwer an inferiour, in any matter of ſerious and religious concernment; and was conſcious he might have a much better reaſon for declining. Having the charge of a numerous congregation, he might think it inconſiſtent with duty to ſpend ſo much time to inſtruct an individual, as it would take to obviate the difficulties I had propoſed for ſolution.

But ſtill remaining incapable of reſolving the difficulties myſelf, and finding others equally embarraſſed, who were deſirous that the letter ſhould be publiſhed, with ſome additional remarks; with deference to their judgment, I conſented, ſuppoſing it would obviate the foremention'd reaſon of his declining an anſwer; as it is thought probable more than one will be inſtructed, if the objections and difficulties I have ſuggeſted ſhould receive a fair and candid ſolution.

I pretend to no equality with Mr. Murray, but that of a candidate for eternity. I mean not to enter the field of publick controverſy as a diſputant, but only as an impartial, inquiſitive ſpectator.

I have objected to nothing in Mr. Murray's diſcourſe, but what appeared to me repugnant to the word of God, and the dictates of impartial reaſon. I have not deſignedly miſconſtru-

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ed his words in any inſtance, nor mentioned one conſequence but what appeared to me to flow ſpontaneouſly from his own words.

The latter part of the letter, in which I ſuggeſted ſome of my own ideas upon the point in diſpute, I think I ſhould not have written, had I then deſigned to publiſh. But to prevent exceptions, it appeared needful to publiſh the whole letter. I hope therefore to be excuſed the liberty I have taken to explain myſelf, and enforce the ideas.

I have made no alterations, that I am aware of, in the ſenſe of the letter, and very few even with regard to ſtile.

I am not fond of the term author, *in this diſpute, it being often taken in an ill ſenſe, and have deſignedly neglected it in the following remarks; wiſhing to clothe my ideas in language as inoffenſive as poſſible. There are other terms made uſe of by almoſt all chriſtians, I believe of every denomination, which I ſuppoſe import as much as the word* author, *in the ſenſe it is uſed. Few, I think, ſcruple, in their addreſſes to God, to ſtile him The* Great First Cause *of all things; The* All-wise Disposer *of all events, &c. &c. And as theſe terms are ſeldom taken in an ill ſenſe, perhaps it would be better to uſe them inſtead of the term* author.

I wiſh to have it carefully remembered, through the whole of the following remarks, that I have no thought or ſuſpicion that God is in any way the cauſe of ſin, which reflects the leaſt diſhonour on his glorious character, or renders ſinners leſs criminal than if they were independent agents, in an abſolute ſenſe. I ſuppoſe he is the cauſe of evil, no otherwiſe than by being the cauſe of all volition. And by volition, I underſtand free agency or voluntary action. And if any one will convince me that any thing I have written is in any manner injurious to the divine character, or inconſiſtent with free agency and criminality in the ſinner, I ſhall moſt cordially renounce it, and think myſelf under obligations of gratitude for his ſervice.

A LETTER

A

LETTER

TO THE

REV. JOHN MURRAY.

THORNTON, *July* 30, 1785.

DEAR AND REVEREND SIR,

OF late I have been favoured with a diſcourſe of yours, upon THE ORIGIN OF EVIL. Upon a careful and attentive peruſal of which, ſome difficulties aroſe, to me inſuperable. Some of them I have penned in the following pages; expecting, if they are obviated, others will remove of courſe.

The readineſs you manifeſted, ſome years ago, to converſe with an inferiour, upon this point, emboldens me to lay before you theſe difficulties; in hopes you will condeſcend to write, and correct me, if wrong. I wiſh not to retain error, if I have imbibed it.

Your compliance, Sir, will oblige an inquirer after truth; who, without diſſimulation, ſubſcribes,

Your cordial friend, and humble ſervant,

NOAH WORCESTER.

Rev. JOHN MURRAY, *Newbury-Port.*

First. "From the nature of cauſation," you ſay, "it is certain there can be no poſitive reality in the effect, which was not firſt in its cauſe." (Page 21.)

Will it not follow from this,

1. That there never was, and that there never can be any ſuch thing as creation? For according to this, every thing poſitive in the effect, exiſted in its cauſe, prior to its appearing in the effect; and the ſame thing appearing only in a different form or mode, is by no means equivalent to what we commonly underſtand by creation.

2. That God is not only an immaterial, but a material ſubſtance? For if matter now exiſts, it exiſted in its cauſe.*

3. That

* In the teſtimony of the preſbytery of which Mr. Murray is one, we are told, with regard to matter, that, "To ſuppoſe it to be an emanation from the divine eſſence, is either to deny its being matter, or to ſuppoſe matter and ſpirit to be the ſame thing." And again, "He that denies the immediate creation of matter, muſt maintain every ſingle atom to be the eternal God," (p. 108.) The analogy of this with the propoſition under conſideration, I leave for the learned to explain.

Speaking of God (Sermon, p. 30) Mr. Murray ſays, "For however we aſſert him to be univerſally the firſt cauſe, it will by no means follow that he is the immediate efficient cauſe of all things. To affirm this, is downright pantheiſm. Pleading in this ſenſe that God is all things, we unavoidably infer, that all things are God." Whether God is the immediate efficient cauſe of every thing or not, I do not ſee that aſſerting this, is pleading that God is all things, unleſs we ſuppoſe the cauſe and the effect to be invariably one and the ſame. But if affirming this, is pleading that God is all things, muſt not whatever he is the immediate cauſe of, be God? If the propoſition be good in whole, why not in part? And will it not unavoidably follow from this method of reaſoning, that all things are God? For, if whatever God be the immediate cauſe of, is God; then whatever the immediate effect produces, or is the cauſe of, by parity of reaſoning, muſt be God likewiſe. And may we not thus compriſe every thing in the univerſe, and have the laſt effect, as really God as the firſt effect, or even as the firſt cauſe.

Beſides, if "there can be no poſitive reality in the effect which was not firſt in its cauſe;" unleſs there was ſomething in God which was not God,

3. That the Divine Being is a compound, not only of matter and ſpirit, but of all the natures, tempers, diſpoſitions and qualities, in the animal and vegetable world? And,

4. That God is all things and all things are God? This you have exploded I am ſenſible; but I ſee not but it follows inevitably. For if nothing poſitive can be in the effect, but what was firſt in its cauſe; what are thoſe things which we have ſuppoſed to be the works of creation, but emanations from

God, there can be nothing but God in any of the effects he has produced.

Mr. Murray grants, in p. 80, that God creates natural evil. In p. 10, he informs us, that "natural evil is properly the effect of moral." If natural evil be properly the effect of moral, how is it poſſible that God ſhould be the cauſe of the latter but by being the cauſe of the former? And if "there can be no poſitive reality in the effect which was not firſt in its cauſe," muſt it not follow, that natural evil was firſt in moral, and both were firſt in God? And conſequently, that God is not only the moſt ſinful, but the moſt miſerable of all beings; guilty of all the ſins, and ſubject to all the pains and diſtreſſes, which ever have been or will be in the univerſe!

Further, Mr. Murray teaches (p. 80) that "Natural evils are not real evils, but good, in a moral view." So it appears that ſomething which is good in a moral view is the proper effect of moral evil. And conſequently there is either ſomething in the effect which was not in its cauſe; or ſomething in moral evil which is good in a moral view.

I muſt confeſs I ſee no way, upon theſe principles of cauſation, to account for the fall of angels and men, but by ſuppoſing that God was, not only the cauſe, but, the fountain of ſin. For if there can be no poſitive reality in the effect which was not firſt in its cauſe, neither angel or man could be the cauſe of any evil but what was firſt in himſelf; i. e. before he cauſed it; and there could be no evil in them, but what was firſt in *their* cauſe, which was God himſelf. Yea, it is difficult for me to conceive in what their fall conſiſted; for they could do nothing but cauſe that to be which was already in exiſtence.

If theſe principles are admitted, it will perhaps be eaſy to conceive, in a ſenſe heretofore unthought of, what Solomon meant by ſaying, *There is no new thing under the ſun*: For there is nothing but what coexiſted with the Deity from eternity.

from the Great Firſt Cauſe, or "varying modes of his exiſtence?"

Secondly. Upon the forementioned principle, you ſay, that "Evil can never come from any other than an evil cauſe," (p. 23.)

God, you allow, to be immutably good, and all the works of creation good. Angels and men at firſt upright. Moral evil, you grant, exiſts. Now, where ſhall we find an evil cauſe of this evil?

Nothing in the Creator, and nothing in the creation, but what was good; yet evil has taken place, which could not, without an evil cauſe. This, Sir, is a kind of paradox to me, which I cannot unriddle.*

If I agree with you, (p. 27) that the agent is the cauſe of his own acts, the difficulty ſtill remains. For all the agents were good, until the firſt evil took place; and therefore they could not be the *evil* cauſe of the firſt *evil*.†

Or, if I grant evil originates from a deficiency in the finite underſtanding,‡ or in abuſe of liberty, or what I will, *that* muſt

* If there was nothing but good in the univerſe, when evil firſt took place, what but good could be the cauſe of it?

† If it be inconſiſtent with goodneſs to cauſe evil, it is juſt as impoſſible that a good angel or man ſhould be the cauſe of it, as that it ſhould be cauſed by God himſelf. And ſince it is thus evident that the firſt evil had a good cauſe, why is it not as rational to ſuppoſe, that he who *worketh all things after the counſel of his own will*, for ſome holy and wiſe end, cauſed it to take place; as to ſuppoſe it was introduced contrary to his will, by ſome other good being whoſe will was perfectly conformed to his own?

‡ Mr. Murray ſays, (p. 32) "That moral agents ſhould have any real evil in any faculty of their natures; that they ſhould lack any faculty, or any good quality in any faculty, that might be neceſſary for enabling them to right action; or the want of which might cauſe them by a natural inclination to lean to wrong; or, in a word, that they ſhould labour under any defect as they at firſt dropt from the all creating hand; theſe are all ſuppoſitions

muſt be evil, and muſt have an evil cauſe. And upon this footing I ſee no other way than to purſue, from effect to cauſe, until I have chaſed evil out of the univerſe, or fixed it in the Great Firſt Cauſe.

THIRDLY. The next difficulty I ſhall mention, ariſes from your definition of moral evil. Having told what *virtue* is, you aſk, "What then is *vice?*" And ſay, "All agree to anſwer, It is the direct oppoſite to virtue, and that in all reſpects.

poſitions which would infer, either that they were not the creatures of God, or that he was not a being of pure rectitude of nature."

In p. 37 and 38, we have ſomething which appears to me of a contrary complexion: "A finite underſtanding cannot ſee all objects at once; nor all parts of the ſame object: Hence it cannot be infallible in its conceptions about any. The narrowneſs of its limits occaſions the contemplation of one part of courſe to exclude the reſt: Its beſt views are of conſequence partial. From partial views wrong judgments may ariſe; by wrong judgments the objective motives may be unfairly preſented to the will; and thus wrong volitions may be induced. Thence enſues a miſapplication of all the powers, and ſo is brought forth all the evil belonging to the affections, paſſions, and conduct."

How to reconcile theſe paſſages, I am utterly at a loſs. In the firſt we are taught, that evil "could not originate from the want of any faculty, or any good quality in any faculty, which might be neceſſary for enabling the agent to right action." In the latter, the cauſe of evil is all attributed to a natural deficiency in the finite underſtanding.

In the view of the latter paragraph, I would query, 1. Whether ſin is any thing more than a bare miſtake or error in judgment? 2. Whether God is not a hard maſter in requiring right volitions, without giving a competent underſtanding?

In page 36, Mr. Murray informs us, that he has found the *Achan* in the camp. He ſays, "The very exiſtence of liberty opens the door for its being abuſed, and the abuſe of it in fact is the immediate ſource of vice; the true cauſe or origin of all the evil in the univerſe."

The matter now ſeems to be brought to a point. Let us then examine a moment. Is not abuſe of liberty, a ſin itſelf? Will not every body ſay, Yes? What then have we found, but the moſt manifeſt confuſion of cauſe and effect; one ſin not only made the cauſe of another, but the ſame ſin, both the cauſe and the effect of *itſelf!*

ſpects. If virtue then is a poſitive, vice is a negative, in the nature of things." Permit me, Sir, to vary the mode of expreſſion: If virtue is ſomething, vice is nothing, in the nature of things. Further, if virtue be a moral exerciſe, ſin is not. This I think amounts to no more than your own words. You ſay, "Sin is only the privation, want, or abſence, of the poſitive nature; and unleſs we would venture to ſay, the Great Firſt Cauſe is a deficient cauſe, we may not go about to affirm that it required an exertion of his omnipotent energy to produce ſin; or that defect, nonentity, or mere privation, is the effect of divine creating might." If this be a juſt definition of ſin, I think the diſpute is very needleſs; a diſpute about *nothing*, or, rather, the *cauſe* of *nothing*.

But, Sir, there are ſome things in ſcripture, and your own writings, which I cannot conſtrue in conſiſtency with this definition. The Bible tells me that ſin is (not barely the want of conformity unto, but) a tranſgreſſion of the law; that the carnal mind is enmity againſt God; that ſinners are haters of God, light, truth, &c. that they love themſelves, falſehood and vanity. It appears to me that theſe repreſentations amount to more than "nonentity, mere privation."*

Privation

* When I wrote the letter, I apprehended a difficulty in admitting any nature to ſin, upon Mr. Murray's definition. Since which, to remove that difficulty, I have been told, that there is a reality in privation. But this is yet above my comprehenſion; and I wiſh to have it explained what that reality is, which conſiſts in the privation or abſence of Chriſt's body from the earth. It is true, there is a reality with regard to matter of fact; i. e. his body is really abſent: But does the mere abſence of his body conſtitute any thing upon which a nature can be predicated?

Perhaps ſome may think there is a reality in darkneſs, which is cauſed by the abſence or privation of the ſun. But it may be obſerved, that darkneſs was upon the face of the deep before the ſun was brought into exiſtence. And if darkneſs was the ſame, before the ſun exiſted, as it is now, in conſequence of its withdrawment, why may we not as rationally ſuppoſe, that the privation or abſence of the ſun, was the cauſe of that previous

Privation and nonentity can make no reſiſtance: But the Bible informs us, that ſinners do always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt. And I cannot ſee how "nonentity or mere privation" can commence and maintain ſuch a war with holineſs, as the apoſtle

previous darkneſs, as of that which ſucceeds its diurnal departure? Or why may we not as well ſay, that waſhing paint from the ſkin, is the cauſe of the natural complexion which appears in conſequence thereof?

But granting that ſin is the privation of holineſs, and that in this privation there is a reality, I aſk, What then is virtue? If it be, as Mr. Murray ſays, the direct oppoſite to vice in all reſpects; if there be a reality in vice, there is none in virtue. But how ſhall we compromiſe theſe matters? Virtue is a poſitive, vice a negative; in vice there is a reality, in virtue there is none. What then ſhall we ſay, but that virtue is a poſitive *nothing*, and vice a negative *ſomething?*

I was much ſurpriſed to find ſuch a definition of moral evil in Mr. Murray's performance. For I really thought, from his former publications, that he was full in the ſentiment of man's poſitive ſinfulneſs. In his ſermon on the death of Mrs. Lane, he ſays of the heart of man, "We look into it for love, and lo! enmity againſt God reigns in every paſſion, and gives its own complexion to all our inward powers." Again, of man, he ſays, "His innate antipathy againſt God and holineſs, has poiſoned his taſte, and jaundiced his eye."

Much more of the ſame complexion might be collected from his publications. But now it ſeems we are to give a negative meaning to all ſuch paſſages, and allow them to import no more than a mere blank in the ſoul, which ought to be filled with holineſs.

And if we admit the definition, when the Bible repreſents the hearts of ſinners as full of evil, madneſs, hatred, enmity, &c. theſe muſt all ſtand for negatives, and import no more than that the heart, that noble apartment, aſſigned for the reſidence of holy love, inſtead of being filled with *that*, or any thing elſe, is but a mere vacuity, without inhabitant.

But if language has become ſo fickle and indeterminate, that poſitives and negatives are uſed as convertible terms, is it not vain to attempt ever to eſtabliſh any point by the Bible, or any other form of words? If one may affix a negative meaning to the words *ſin*, *hatred*, *enmity*, &c. why may not another do the ſame by *love*, *holineſs*, *charity*, &c. and affirm that they only import a privation of ſin, enmity, &c? What foundation in ſcripture have we for one, more than the other?

But,

tle deſcribes, or lead perſons to commit murder, blaſphemy, &c. In Bathkol* it is ſaid, reſpecting ſinners, "Their wills are enmity againſt God," (p. 201.) And, in p. 219, deſcribing the difference between legal and evangelical repentance, it is ſaid, "The horrors of one, ariſing from enmity againſt God," &c. In p. 265, mention is made of vicious habits and diſpoſitions, of their natures, and the everlaſting permanency of them. I ſee not how privation can conſtitute enmity; or how nature and permanency can be predicated of nonentity.

In the diſcourſe under conſideration, you ſay, "It is evident the ſinner's defect is wilful." Does not wilfulneſs imply ſomething poſitive? In the ſame diſcourſe you ſay, "It cannot be a problem whether moral evil in fact exiſts." Does not exiſtence imply poſitive being? And is it not difficult to aſcribe exiſtence to nonentity?

If my difficulties here ariſe from a miſconception of the meaning of the words negative, deficiency, privation, nonentity, or exiſtence, I hope you will excuſe my want of education.

FOURTHLY. There are difficulties attending your anſwers to ſome of the objections.

As to the firſt, (which is, "The exiſtence of ſin is neceſſary,") I know of none who ſuppoſe the exiſtence of ſin neceſſary, in any other ſenſe than the death of Chriſt was neceſſary.†

In

But, by the way, on ſuppoſition that ſinners are totally depraved; and that their depravity conſiſts in the mere abſence or privation of holineſs, I wiſh to be informed upon what footing one ſinner can be deemed a greater criminal than another. The difference of magnitude in nonentities I apprehend can be calculated only by cyphers.

* Teſtimony of the Preſbytery.

† Here I was hardly explicit enough. I ſuppoſed both events were neceſſary for the diſplay of the divine perfections, and the greateſt good of the univerſe; one as really ſo as the other.

I think Mr. Murray has given a very foreign conſtruction to the word *neceſſary*, from what it appears to have in the objection. He ſays, "Whatever

In anſwer to the ſecond, (which is, " Sin was neceſſary for the greateſt good of the univerſe, and the greateſt glory of God,") you ſay, " To ſuppoſe the greateſt good of the univerſe is the reſult of ſin, is to make all the happy beings in it greater debtors for their bliſs to ſin, than to God." But, Sir, it is generally granted, and I think revelation confirms it, that to accompliſh the purpoſe of God in redemption, it was neceſſary that the Jews ſhould crucify the Lord of glory. And will it not follow from what you have ſaid, that all the redeemed are greater debtors for their bliſs, to this conduct of the Jews, than to God ?*

Further,

ever exiſtence is neceſſary, muſt be eternal." I believe but few readers would underſtand the objection any otherwiſe, than if the word needful had been uſed, inſtead of neceſſary. Perhaps Mr. Murray would not ſcruple to ſay that it was neceſſary for him to write in defence of what he ſuppoſed to be the truth : But if the word muſt be taken in his ſenſe, it would imply, that he had been writing from eternity. Paul ſays, *Thoſe members of the body which ſeem to be more feeble, are neceſſary*. Mr. M—y ſays, " Neceſſary exiſtence is an incommunicable attribute of God himſelf. To aſcribe it, then, to any other being, is impious blaſphemy." What then does he leſs than to charge Paul with " impious blaſphemy ?"

* How God came either to cauſe or permit ſin to take place, unleſs he ſuppoſed it neceſſary for the greateſt good of the univerſe, is to me inconceivable. Mr. Murray ſuppoſes God did every thing he could, " *conſiſtent with his ſtation to do*," to prevent ſin's taking place, (p. 90.) And that he could not have ſhut it out without excluding virtue too, (p. 65.) And alſo, that there is no fault in the preſent plan which could have been prevented, but by a greater fault, (p. 63.) Yet in anſwer to the preſent objection, he ſuppoſes ſin was not neceſſary for the greateſt good of the univerſe. Now what ideas do ſuch paſſages force on the mind, but theſe : That God could not deviſe a plan that was perfectly agreeable to his mind ; but choſe the preſent as the beſt he could deviſe, in compliance with the common maxim, " Between two evils choooſe the leaſt ;" that he has been infinitely croſſed and diſappointed by the ſins which have taken place in the world ; that he projected the plan of redemption to repair the inroads which were made within his juriſdiction againſt his will ;

that

Further, you ſay, "To aſſert ſin to be neceſſary for God's greateſt glory, is to make ſin the foundation of Jehovah's throne." By the glory of God, in the objection, I underſtand what is called his declarative glory, or the diſplay of the divine perfections. And is not the ſin of the Jews, beforementioned, according to your argument, the foundation of Jehovah's throne? I cannot think you will deny *that* to be neceſſary for the greateſt diſplay of the divine perfections.*

The third objection, you ſay, is both arrogant and abſurd. Arrogant, as it preſumes to dictate to infinite wiſdom, &c. I confeſs I do not ſee any arrogancy in the objection. But you ſay, "It is abſurd, as it ſpeaks of the greateſt evil as in itſelf a great good. For that cannot be very bad which is indiſpenſable to the beſt of all poſſible ſchemes." I do not ſee that evil is ſpoken of, in the objection, as in itſelf a great good, notwithſtanding your argument: And the difficulty in my mind, on this particular, will appear in full view, if you will permit me to apply the argument to a plain caſe. The ſcheme which God had in view, in the redemption of fallen men, was the beſt of all poſſible ſchemes; that the Jews ſhould embrue their hands in the blood of his Son, was indiſpenſable to the accompliſhment of this ſcheme; therefore their conduct in ſo doing could not be very bad.

If

that he has been almoſt ever ſince the creation, endeavouring to repair the loſs which he ſuſtained by the fall of Adam? What ideas more diminutive could be formed of the Almighty? Can this be thought characteriſtick of him *who worketh all things after the counſel of his own will;* and declares, *My counſel ſhall ſtand, and I will do all my pleaſure?* Of him *in whoſe hand our breath is, and whoſe are all our ways?*

* Can it be ſuppoſed that the work of redemption was not neceſſary for the brighteſt diſplay of divine glory? Or can it be ſuppoſed that it was not neceſſary there ſhould be ſinners to redeem, in order to the accompliſhment of this work? If not, how can it be ſuppoſed that the taking place of ſin was not neceſſary for the greateſt glory of God, and the greateſt good of the univerſe?

If I ſhould allow that this was not the beſt of all poſſible ſchemes, the difficulty ſtill remains: For if ſin may be neceſſary in any good plan, it may be in the beſt.*

In anſwer to the 4th objection (which is, "Infinite wiſdom and power muſt of neceſſity chooſe and do the very beſt at all times that it can,") you ſay, "If God muſt of neceſſity act ſo, then, the Almighty is chained faſt in fate." But the Bible, Sir, leads us to conclude that God cannot lie, do unrighteouſly,

* The objection which is ſo arrogant and abſurd, is this, "Sin was a neceſſary part of the beſt poſſible plan for moral government."

In ſhewing the arrogancy of this objection, Mr. Murray quotes two lines from Mr. Pope:

"Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge his juſtice, be the god of God."

Mr. Pope, "to vindicate the ways of God to man," ſays,

"All nature is but art unknown to thee;
All chance, direction which thou canſt not ſee;
All diſcord, harmony not underſtood;
All partial evil, univerſal good;
In ſpite of pride, in erring reaſon's ſpite,
One truth is clear, whatever is, is right."

And to expoſe the folly and ſtupidity of thoſe, who imagine that things might have been planned and conducted better than they have, he ſays to them,

"Go wiſer thou! and, in thy ſcale of ſenſe,
Weigh thy opinion againſt providence;
Call imperfection what thou fancieſt ſuch;
Say, here he gives too little, there too much;
Deſtroy all creatures for thy ſport or guſt;
Yet cry, if man 's unhappy, God 's unjuſt:
If man alone engroſs not heav'n's high care;
Alone made perfect here, immortal there;
Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge his juſtice, be the god of God."

ESSAY on MAN.

In juſtice to the dead, I have quoted theſe lines from Mr. Pope, to contraſt with the ſentiment he is *forced* to eſpouſe. I ſhall leave Mr. Murray, and the reader, to make ſuch reflections and obſervations as ſhall naturally occur.

ſouſly, &c. and may we venture to ſay upon this, that "the Almighty is chained faſt in fate, that there is left no liberty in his acts," &c? I am ſenſible your anſwer mentions *natural neceſſity*; but that is not mentioned in the objection; and I know of none who make this objection, who inſiſt on any other neceſſity than what ariſes from the rectitude of the divine nature, or the perfections of the Deity.

As to the objection's ſetting boundaries to infinity,* I ſuppoſe the perfections of the Deity may be more manifeſted from ſome parts of his work, than others; and he, notwithſtanding, act in the beſt manner poſſible at all times. The wiſdom of a mechanick may be more conſpicuous from ſome parts of a curious machine, than others: Yet his wiſdom and power may be employed in the beſt manner poſſible, in making every part of the machine: Nor ſhould we think he would diſcover more wiſdom, if he ſhould ſpend all his time, in making ſome curious part, than he does in making every part neceſſary for utility. The wiſdom of the workman is known, not only from the apparent beauty of the ſeveral parts of his workmanſhip, ſeparately viewed, but from the adaptedneſs of the whole to utility, when put together. And if every part be as curiouſly wrought as is neceſſary for the beauty and utility of the whole, when put together, it diminiſhes none from the wiſdom of the workman, to ſay, his ſkill is more conſpicuous from ſome parts, than others. For this may be, and yet his wiſdom, on the whole, appear moſt conſummate. So, if God has ever one great end in view, in all he does, I think it not ſafe to ſay, his wiſdom

* Mr. Murray aſks (p. 60) "whether the very idea of infinity does not infer that it never came up to its *ne plus ultra*, and that it never can?" If I may be permitted to anſwer, according to my own judgment, I will ſay, No: But the very idea of infinite wiſdom and power, under the direction of infinite goodneſs, infers, that they are ever up to their *ne plus ultra*, and never can deviate from it.

Query, Whether Mr. Murray's reaſoning on this point does not infer that God has ability to do more than he can?

dom and power are not employed in the beſt manner poſſible at all times, although they are more conſpicuous in an angel, than a toad. Nor may we think they would have been better employed, had he created an equal number of angels and men, inſtead of reptiles and inſects. And however futurity may preſent to our view, "ſyſtem built on ſyſtem, and world on world," as you mention, yet I humbly conceive, we ſhall have no reaſon to think that the allwiſe God does not now, and at all times, chooſe and do the very beſt he can. You call this a ſhocking poſition;* but it appears to me far leſs ſhocking than

* Mr. Murray ſays, (p. 62) "This ſhocking poſition was never maintained until very lately, unleſs by thoſe pagans who held the world to be an infinite body, of which God was the infinite ſoul." I know not how many years the words *very lately* may compriſe; but I think we may trace this ſhocking poſition back through the Bible down to Moſes' hiſtory of the creation: And him we find full in the ſentiment: He ſays, *God's work is perfect*. If his work is perfect, I conclude it could not be better. To ſay his work is perfect, but at the ſame time he could chooſe and do better, is, in my view, a moſt palpable contradiction.

This ſentiment of Mr. Murray, impeaches the divine character in ſuch a ſhocking manner, as it appears to me, that it really gives me pain to attend to it. If any have really ſuch ideas of God, can it be wondered at, that they ſhould be oppoſed to the ſentiment of unreſerved confidence and ſubmiſſion? If we yield to this, what ground have we for confidence in the Almighty? Juſt ſo far as he falls ſhort of chooſing and doing the beſt he can, juſt ſo far he deviates from perfect rectitude. And if it be, as Mr. Murray freely intimates, that God never did and never will chooſe and do the beſt he can, is it not certain that his plan, and all his adminiſtrations, have been, and will be imperfect?

Can his work of creation or redemption be perfectly right? Can his diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments be right? And if he may deviate in *one* degree from perfect rectitude, why not in *ten*? Or why may he not, inſtead of chooſing and doing the *beſt* he can, chooſe and do the *worſt* he can? May we not adopt Mr. Murray's own words, and ſay, "How horrible muſt ſuch doctrine be to the heart that loves to adore the Moſt High! Who would wiſh to be ruled by a ſovereign of this ſort? Who would chooſe to be at the abſolute diſpoſal of ſuch a being,

as

than to assert, that a God of infinite wisdom and power does not choose and do the best he can. For the greatest difficulty arises, when I come to inquire for the reason why he does not; because I can assign no other than a deficiency in his goodness, or something *worse*, if worse can be imagined. Will God require his creatures to do good to the utmost of their abilities, and as this tenet describes? Who could ever worship him in spirit and truth?"

Mr. Murray teaches us that God has bound himself to observe the same rule of right by which he governs his creatures, (p. 48.) And one part of that rule is this, *To him that knoweth to do good and doth it not, to him it is sin.* And according to Mr. Murray's reasoning, there is a good which God has been knowing to from eternity, and has had every ability to effect, but has not done it: Therefore, if Mr. Murray's doctrine be true, is not the Most High chargeable with sinful deficiency; both according to his own word, and the common sense of mankind?

I now submit it to better judges, whether Mr. Murray's sentiments do not imply more than that God is the cause of sin, in the sense of his opponents, yea, even that he himself is a sinner!

But notwithstanding all he has said against the necessity of God's choosing and doing the best he can; he informs us, (p. 54) that all right minds would rejoice in the reign of that being, who is incapable of deviating from the moral perfections of his nature. But if God be incapable of deviating from the moral perfections of his nature, is he not under a necessity of acting conformably to them; and consequently of choosing and doing the best he can at all times? Or shall we absurdly suppose the moral perfections of his nature imperfect?

How Mr. Murray came to introduce this impertinent objection, unless he meant to give up the point in dispute, and upon that demonstrate an imperfection in the divine plan and conduct, is to me inconceivable. For on the footing of sin's not being necessary to the greatest good; and that God is in no sense the cause of it; nothing more foreign than this objection could have been thought of. Who, without forgetting what he was about, would ever think of proving that God was not the cause of sin, by demonstrating that he did not choose and do the best he could at all times? If Mr. Murray had been endeavouring to prove that God was the cause of evil, upon his principles of causation, it might have been necessary to answer such an objection. And the answer he has given would have been very pertinent, if it were conclusive,

and will he not do the ſame himſelf? If ſo, how ſhall God judge the world?

You allow, in anſwer to the 6th objection, that God wills to permit ſin; but ſay, that does not infer that he willed it to be. It is difficult for me to conceive how God could will to permit it, without willing it to be. It appears to me, that God could not will to permit it, unleſs he thought it beſt, on the whole, that it ſhould exiſt. And if he thought beſt it ſhould exiſt, how is it poſſible but he ſhould will its exiſtence? Muſt not a God of infinite perfection will the exiſtence of every thing, which it is beſt on the whole ſhould exiſt?* Nor do I ſee,

* Was it not on the whole beſt that the perfections of the Deity ſhould be manifeſted in the glorious work of redemption? If ſo, was it not beſt that there ſhould be ſinners to redeem, and conſequently beſt that ſin ſhould take place? And if it was beſt on the whole that ſin ſhould take place, was it not beſt that things ſhould be ſo ordered as to render the exiſtence of it infallibly certain? If ſo, who with greater propriety or probability can be ſuppoſed to be the ordering and diſpoſing cauſe of this event than HE whoſe right it is to reign? And is it any reproach upon the divine character to ſay, that God ordered, diſpoſed, and cauſed things to take place, in ſuch a manner as it was on the whole beſt they ſhould take place? If it was on the whole beſt that ſin ſhould take place, then cauſing it to take place, was only cauſing that to be, which it was on the whole beſt ſhould be.

I am not able to conceive how any perſon of good penetration and diſcernment can find any relief or ſatisfaction, from the common diſtinction between willing and permitting

"Here," ſays Mr. Calvin, "they run into the diſtinction of will and permiſſion: But why ſhould we ſay that God permitted it, but becauſe he ſo willeth?" B. 3. C. 23. S. 8.

Again he ſays, "God doth not only permit, but appoint the things to be done, which wicked men do." B. 1. C. 18. S. 1. Further, "The wicked do ſin and periſh, not by God's permiſſion only, but by his will and appointment." B. 3. C. 23. S. 8. "God did not only foreſee, but diſpoſe the fall of man." B. 3. C. 23. S. 7.

Mr. Murray quotes Mr. Calvin as one who was ſtrenuouſly oppoſed to the doctrine of God's being the author of ſin; and no doubt he was ſo, when

ſee, that his willing its exiſtence implies, that ſin is in itſelf a good, or that he has any more complacency in it, than he had in the ſufferings of his Son, whom it pleaſed him to bruiſe.

By willing, I underſtand *decreeing*, purpoſing, chooſing, or preferring.

That

when by author was meant the agent, or him in whom the evil volition or deſign is found. But in what ſenſe he allowed the term, and in what he diſallowed it, may be as ſafely determined from his own words as from any other perſon's.

In his 2. B. 4. C. 2. S. he aſks, "How can we refer the ſelf ſame work to God as author, to Satan as author, and to man as author of it? But that we muſt either excuſe Satan by the company of God, or report God to be the author of evil? Very eaſily; if firſt we look upon the end why it was done, and then the manner how. The purpoſe of the Lord is by calamity to exerciſe the patience of his ſervants; the devil goeth about to drive him to deſpair; the Chaldeans, againſt right and law, ſeek gain of that which is another man's. Such diverſity of purpoſes maketh great difference in the work. Therefore it is properly ſaid that Satan doth work in the reprobate, in whom he exerciſeth his kingdom, the kingdom of wickedneſs: It is alſo ſaid that God worketh in them after his manner; becauſe Satan himſelf, foraſmuch as he is the inſtrument of his wrath, according to his bidding and commandment, turneth himſelf hither and thither to execute his juſt judgments. *I ſpeak not here of God's univerſal moving*, whereby all creatures are ſuſtained, ſo from thence they take their effectual power of doing any thing; *I ſpeak only of that ſpecial doing which appeareth in every ſpecial act.* We ſee, therefore, that it is no abſurdity that one ſelf ſame act be aſcribed to God, to Satan, and to man; but the diverſity in the end, and manner of doing, cauſeth that therein appeareth the juſtice of God to be without fault; and alſo the wickedneſs of Satan and man bewrayeth itſelf to their reproach."

Speaking of Sihon, he ſays, "Therefore becauſe it was God's will to have him deſtroyed, the making his heart obſtinate was God's preparation for his deſtruction." B. 2. C. 4. S. 3. "There ariſeth a hard queſtion, ſays he, out of other places, when it is ſaid that God boweth, and draweth at his will, Satan himſelf and all the reprobate. Upon this was deviſed the diſtinction between doing and ſuffering. It ſeemeth to them unreaſonable that man ſhould, by the will and commandment of God, be made blind, and ſo by and by puniſhed for his blindneſs. Therefore

they

That you may have full advantage to correct me, I ſhall expoſe ſome of my own ideas to your examination.

1. I conceive that the Ruler of the univerſe is a God of infinite immutable purity and perfection.

2. That he has had, from eternity, one great and glorious end in view: For the accompliſhment of which he infallibly foreordained whatever comes to paſs.

3. That *angels* and *men* are moral agents.

4. That moral agency is found in volition, and not in any thing prior to it, or conſequent upon it: Not in cauſing volition, or doing as we pleaſe, but rather in being pleaſed to do, or chooſing.

5. That volitions are of two kinds, good and evil. That holineſs expreſſes the nature of good volitions, and ſin the nature of evil. That holineſs and ſin expreſs different *natures*, and not different *cauſes*.

6. That the hearts of all, as well as the King's, are in the hands of the Lord; and that he turneth them witherſoever he

they ſeek to eſcape by this ſhift, that this is done by the ſufferance, but not by the will of God. But he himſelf plainly pronouncing that he *doth it, doth reject that ſhift*. If the madneſs of Ahab be the judgment of God, then the device of bare ſufferance, is vain. They triſle, that thruſt in a bare ſufferance, in place of the providence, of God; as though God ſat in a watch-tower, waiting for the chances of fortune, and ſo his judgments ſhould hang upon the will of men. B. 1. C. 18. S. 1. And I do turn back their objection: For if to harden, do ſignify but a bare ſufferance, then, the very notion of obſtinacy ſhall not be properly in Pharaoh. Now, how weak and fooliſh were it to expound, as if Pharaoh did only ſuffer himſelf to be hardened?" B. 1. C. 18. S. 2.

That there is a perfect analogy in all Mr. Calvin has written upon this point, I will not aſſert. If there be not, I am not accountable for that. I have not quoted him as infallible proof of any thing that I have ſaid or am about to ſay. Theſe quotations, however, may ſerve to ſhew that the ideas I am about to illuſtrate are not altogether of modern invention. At the ſame time, the quotations muſt ſtand or fall according to their merit.

he will; and thus governs all their actions, agreeably to the aſſembly's catechiſm.

7. That God's being the cauſe of volition, does not infringe upon free agency: That he may be the cauſe of ſinful volitions, conſiſtently with free agency and criminality, as well as of holy volitions, conſiſtently with free agency and praiſe-worthineſs.

8. That men are not paſſive in volition, but active; they may be conſidered as efficients in volition; but not the cauſe of their own efficiency.

END OF THE LETTER.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

AS the foregoing ideas were not at firſt deſigned for publick inſpection, I hope to be indulged the liberty of making ſome obſervations to illuſtrate them.

1. As to the firſt, I ſuppoſe no illuſtration is needful.

2. With reſpect to foreordination or decree: By this I underſtand the eternal unchangeable will and purpoſe of God, reſpecting the exiſtence of future events.

Before God exerted his power in creation, did not the exiſtence of all future events depend abſolutely on his ſovereign will and pleaſure? And did not the ordering and diſpoſing of them all, of conſequence, devolve on himſelf? Did he not know the ſure effect and conſequence of every exertion of his power? And when he willed an exertion of his power, did he not will the exiſtence of every event that was conſequential thereto? If ſo, how could Mr. Murray ſay, that God's decrees were neither the natural or moral cauſe of evil?* I can eaſily agree with Mr. Murray, that ſomething more than the eternal decree

* Page 74.

decree is neceſſary to an event's taking place: But does not the exertion of divine power depend upon the volition or purpoſe of the divine mind, as really as the effect produced does on the exertion of power which produces it? If ſo, did not every event that ever took place, come into exiſtence in an abſolute dependence on the divine will or decree?

Mr. Murray has written ſeveral pages to prove that neither the divine foreknowledge or decree made the exiſtence of ſin neceſſary. "I allow," ſays Preſident Edwards, "what Dr. Whitby ſays, that mere knowledge does not affect the thing known to make it more certain or future. But yet I ſay, it ſuppoſes and proves the thing to be already, both future and certain, i. e. neceſſarily future."

Does not the foreknowledge of an event, depend on a perceived connexion between the event foreknown, and ſomething which is to be the cauſe and ground of its exiſtence? And is not this connexion of cauſe and effect eſtabliſhed by the will of the Moſt High? If it be not, is not his will ſubjected to a fatal connexion of cauſes and effects, which he had no hand in eſtabliſhing? But if it be, did he not will the exiſtence of the event foreknown, by willing and eſtabliſhing the connexion between that and its cauſe? And does not ſuch a will and ſuch an eſtabliſhed connexion, make the exiſtence of the event both certain and neceſſary? Calvin ſays, "I confeſs ſincerely with Auguſtin, that the will of God is a neceſſity of things, and that what he willeth muſt of neceſſity come to paſs."*

3. That angels and men are moral agents. This I believe is rarely diſputed. But with regard to angels, I think it is denied by Mr. Murray.† If I underſtand him, he ſuppoſes a ſtate of confirmation utterly inconſiſtent with moral agency—virtue or vice. He ſays, "Such interference, before their probation is expired, would be in direct contradiction to moral government. Freedom is neceſſary to both virtue and vice.

* B. 3. C. 23. S. 8. † See page 41, 42, 43.

vice. The creature then, who, by theſe means, is made incapable of vice, could no longer poſſeſs or exerciſe virtue by his own choice; and therefore not at all." And much more of the ſame complexion. In what then does the happineſs of the heavenly ſtate conſiſt, if the inhabitants of it are incapacitated for the exerciſe of virtue and holineſs? This is a reſting from their labours, in an emphatical ſenſe, which I never thought of before. And who but the ſlothful ſervant would wiſh for ſuch a heaven as this? Is not this rather a confirmation *againſt* holineſs, than a confirmation *in* holineſs? And will not the chriſtian, who finds his happineſs in the exerciſe of holineſs, ſhudder at the thought of being thus rendered incapable of it?

But, by the way, does not Mr. Murray's reaſoning conclude as forcibly againſt the virtue of the Divine Being, as againſt that of angels and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect? For who is more confirmed in holineſs, or incapable of vice, than the God of truth?

4. That moral agency is found in volition, &c. If, inſtead of ſaying that moral agency is found in volition, I had ſaid, moral agency *is* volition, my idea would have been more happily expreſſed: For I ſuppoſed moral agency and moral volition were preciſely one and the ſame.

Mr. Murray ſuppoſes *moral agency* implies a "liberty or power to *act*, or *not* to *act*, according to the pleaſure of the agent." And that without *this liberty*, no one could be properly a ſubject of law; capable of virtue or vice; or deſerving of praiſe or blame.*

If by a liberty or power to act, or not to act, Mr. Murray means internal action or chooſing, is not the propoſition abſurd? For, what is the difference between chooſing as we pleaſe, and chooſing as we chooſe? But if he meant external action, or a power to execute the deſire or purpoſe of the heart, is not the ſentiment evidently fallacious? *As a man thinketh*

* Page 33, 65.

thinketh in his heart, ſo is he. If a perſon who really deſires to kill or injure his neighbour, is prevented by a fit of the palſy, or ſome extrinſick cauſe, is he excuſable in the eye of him who looketh on the heart?

Mr. Murray informs us, in his ſermon on the death of Mrs. Lane, that the wills of ſinners are ſuch, that they would not ſpare even the life of Jehovah, were he a man, or within their power: So that if the liberty or power he pleads for is neceſſary to conſtitute a moral agent, a ſinner cannot be one *completely*, without being inveſted with power ſufficient to take the life of his Maker: And conſequently, in the exerciſe of all that enmity againſt God, he is not a moral agent, nor blame-worthy, *becauſe he hath not a liberty or power to act according to his pleaſure.*

That Mr. Murray ſpoke with reference to external action, I think is pretty evident from p. 35, where he explains himſelf, "A liberty of acting according to choice, and chooſing freely."

5. With regard to holineſs and ſin, I conceive that they are predicated on the nature of volitions, without any reference to their cauſe. And if they cannot be predicated in this manner, I think it is eaſy to demonſtrate that there is neither of them in the univerſe. Preſident Edwards ſays, "If the vice of a vicious act of the will, lies not in the nature of the act, but the cauſe; then for the ſame reaſon neither can the viciouſneſs of that cauſe lie in the nature of the thing itſelf, but in its cauſe; and when we come to this higher cauſe, ſtill the reaſon of the thing holds good. And thus we muſt drive faultineſs back from a lower cauſe to a higher *in infinitum*: And that is thoroughly to baniſh it from the world. On theſe principles, vice, or moral evil, cannot conſiſt in any thing that is an effect: And ſo it follows that faultineſs can lie only in that cauſe, which is a cauſe *only*, and no effect of any thing. Nor yet can it lie in this, for then it muſt lie in the

the nature of the thing itſelf."* The ſame method of reaſoning I ſuppoſe will hold good with reſpect to virtue.

6. The hearts of *all*, as well as the *King's*, are in the hand of the Lord, &c.

Solomon ſays, *The King's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water he turneth it whitherſoever he will.* Prov. xxi. 1. And do we not find in proof of this, that the Lord ſtirred up Cyrus to build him an houſe at Jeruſalem? And likewiſe that he ſtirred up many wicked Princes, and ſent them to execute his judgments; that he hardened the hearts of Pharaoh† and Sihon; moved David to number the people; and

* Inquiry, page 270, 271. Boſton Edition.

† Mr. Murray teaches us, (p. 89) that the heart of the ſinner naturally hardens, when God withdraws his reſtraints; and ſays, "God can be conſidered as the cauſe of this hardneſs, no otherwiſe than the hand by which a ſtone had been held up in the air is the cauſe of its falling by letting it go; when the truth is, nothing but its own innate principle of gravitation carries it downwards." But does this remove any difficulty? What ſhall I reply to the inquiſitive mind which aſks me, Who is the *cauſe* of this innate principle of gravitation? The mind that is conſcious there is ſuch a principle, naturally inquires for the *cauſe*; for if it conſiders this innate principle as any thing diſtinct from the Deity, the inference of a prior cauſe is unavoidable.

I am aware of a very popular objection to this query. When the inquiry is carried to this length, many are ready to object and ſay, This is a ſecret not revealed, and we have no buſineſs to pry into it; it is affecting to be wiſe above what is written, &c. But is this in fact the caſe? Is it a ſecret which is not revealed? Is not the truth of the matter directly the reverſe of this? Is it not revealed in the moſt plain and poſitive terms? And are not the plain declarations of God's word brought upon the rack, and made to ſpeak a ſenſe which the Holy Spirit never thought of, otherwiſe than as the inventions of ſome human minds, to hide the truth from themſelves and others? And are not many loaded with the moſt horrible and odious epithets, for giving credit to the expreſs language of the Bible? It appears to me a ſtrange method of procedure, to attempt a vindication of God's character, by denying the truth of his own declarations. But who are they who affect to be wiſe above what is written,

and cauſed Rehoboam to reject the counſel of the old men, &c. &c.

But are Kings ſingular from the reſt of mankind in this reſpect? Are not the hearts of others likewiſe in the hand of the

written; *they* who believe the word as it *is written*, or *they*, who pretend to know ſo much better than the Holy Spirit, as to contradict what he ſays, and give an oppoſite meaning to *his* words? When God ſays, he hardens the ſinner's heart, *they* ſay he only ſuffers him to harden his own heart: When God ſays, he ſtirs up and ſends wicked Princes to execute his vengeance on the rebellious; *they* ſay he only ſuffers them to ſtir themſelves up, and *permits* them to go: When an *apoſtle* ſays, that ſinners did what God's hand and counſel determined before to be done; *they* ſay, that God only "determined not to interpoſe his almighty arm, and hinder" their doing thoſe things. If this is not affecting to be wiſe above what is written, I do not underſtand the phraſe.

But is it not very evident that Paul underſtood ſomething more by God's *hardening* the ſinner's heart, than a bare permiſſion? He introduces the matter in the ninth of Romans, in ſetting forth the ſovereignty of God, in his diſpoſal of events. *For the Scripture ſaith unto Pharaoh, Even for this purpoſe have I raiſed thee up; that I might ſhew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth.* He then ſtates an objection, which many have the confidence to make at the preſent day: Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath reſiſted his will? What pertinency would there have been in his attending to this objection, if he underſtood nothing more than that God permitteth ſinners to harden their own hearts? Would any ſuch objection naturally occur upon that footing? But why did he not invalidate the objection, by ſhewing it implied a falſehood, in ſuppoſing God's will was not reſiſted? He never ſo much as intimated that God's will was reſiſted; but anſwered the objection by the allegory of the potter and the clay; to ſhew that God does, and has a right to do, as he will with his creatures. He did not pretend to deny God's hardening the heart; but implicitly allowed it, after it was objected to, and endeavoured to ſhew that he had a right ſo to do.

As Mr. Murray allows that God is the cauſe of holy volitions, but not of thoſe which are ſinful, I think the allegory, to comport with his ſentiments, ſhould run thus; *Shall the thing formed ſay to him that let it form it-*

ſelf,

the Lord ? If not, why is renewing, reſtraining and ſanctifying the hearts of men, aſcribed to him ? Why is victory aſcribed to him, when his people's enemies are ſo diſheartened and intimidated, that one may chaſe a thouſand, and two put ten thouſand to flight ? Why did Joſeph ſay to his brethren, YE thought EVIL againſt me, but God *meant it* unto good ? And again, God did ſend me before you to preſerve life. Why did David ſay, Let him curſe, for the Lord hath bidden him ? Why does the Pſalmiſt ſay that God turned the hearts of the Egyptians to hate his people, to deal ſubtilly with his ſervants ? What does inſpiration mean, by ſaying, Man's goings are of the Lord ; the way of man is not in himſelf ; and the Lord made all things for himſelf, even the wicked for the day of evil ?

Again, what do we mean when we acknowledge that our hearts are in the hand of the Lord, and pray him to turn us to himſelf ? To unite our hearts in prayer and praiſe, and in the common defence of the country ?

In

ſelf, Why haſt thou ſuffered me to make myſelf thus, or ſo ? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the ſame lump, to make one veſſel unto honour, and TO PERMIT ANOTHER TO MAKE ITSELF *unto diſhonour ?* And thoſe likewiſe in Iſaiah, *Shall the ax boaſt itſelf againſt him that permitteth it to hew ? Or ſhall the ſaw magnify itſelf againſt him that* SUFFERETH IT TO SHAKE ITSELF ? Again, *Wo unto him that ſaith to his father, what haſt thou* PERMITTED TO BEGET ITSELF, *or to the woman, what haſt thou ſuffered* TO BRING ETSELF FORTH ? Such abſurdity perhaps may be *ſeen*, if not *felt*.

When I read over what Mr. Murray has written with regard to Pharaoh, and other ſinners, and take into view his definition of moral evil, I am utterly at a loſs for an intelligible meaning to his words. For the ſelf-exiſting, ſelf-hardening, conſolidating properties of mere privation and nonentity, I confeſs I do not underſtand.

If Mr. Murray had been as much in favour with his opponents, as he appears to be with the inſpired writers, might he not as eaſily have reconciled their ſentiments to his own, as to have reconciled the Bible ? Would not one method of procedure have anſwered in both caſes ? It is only giving a negative conſtruction to poſitive terms, and the work is completed.

In a word, what is the ſcope and deſign of the Bible, but to repreſent the Moſt High as the allwiſe diſpoſer of *all events*; and us his creatures as totally dependent on him for our beings, and every power and faculty of action; and to teach us a proper temper of mind in this ſtate of dependence.

Did not the fulfilment of all the prophecies, reſpecting the Meſſiah and his church, depend on an innumerable multitude of the volitions of men, both good and evil, in ſuch a manner that they could not be accompliſhed without them; nor without their taking place in an eſtabliſhed order and connexion? And do not the dictates of common ſenſe conſtrain us to believe, that God was the ordering and diſpoſing cauſe of thoſe volitions, on which the fulfilment of his own predictions depended.

And do not chriſtians of every denomination conform to this ſentiment, in their common diſcourſe, and in their addreſſes to God? When any murder is committed, or any traitorous conſpiracy is carried into execution, do not they ſay, theſe are melancholy diſpenſations of *divine providence?* That God was pleaſed ſo to order in *his providence*, or the like? And do they not pray God to ſanctify ſuch afflictive *providences?* If they do not uſe ſuch expreſſions in conformity to the ſentiment Mr. Murray oppoſes, I wiſh to know what they mean by *providence.*

What I referred to in the aſſembly's catechiſm, is, their anſwer to this queſtion, "*What are God's works of Providence?*" Mr. Murray has referred us to their confeſſion and catechiſm, as bearing teſtimony in his favour. I am ſenſible they deny God's being the *author of ſin*; and I ſuppoſe almoſt every one would, when by the author is meant the ſinner, or the ſinning agent. But that they ſuppoſed God to be the ordering and diſpoſing cauſe of all actions, as well ſinful as holy, I think is as evident as words can make it. In their confeſſion of faith, chap. v. of Providence they ſay, "God, the creator

of

of all things, doth uphold, direct, diſpoſe and govern all creatures, *actions* and things, from the greateſt even to the leaſt." Again, in the ſame chapter, they ſay, "The almighty power, unſearchable wiſdom, and infinite goodneſs of God, ſo far manifeſt themſelves in his providence, that it extendeth even to the *firſt fall, and all other ſins of angels and men*: And that *not* by a *bare permiſſion*, but ſuch as hath joined with it a wiſe and powerful bounding, or otherwiſe *ordering*, and *governing* them, in a manifold diſpenſation to his own holy and wiſe ends." Then, upon this, they add, what I before mentioned, a denial of God's being the author of ſin. But if the obvious meaning of their words do not imply a divine agency and diſpoſal with reſpect to every action or event, without diſcrimination, or reſerve, I know of none which can convey ſuch an idea.

But that this was the deſign of the aſſembly, I think is very evident from their proofs. Some of which are the following. 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. *And again the anger of the Lord was kindled againſt Iſrael, and he moved David againſt them to ſay, Go number the people.* 1 Kings xxii. 23. *Now therefore the Lord hath put a lying ſpirit into the mouth of all theſe prophets*, &c. And Gen. l. 20. Iſaiah x. 6. and following verſes.

Therefore, under the protection of the expreſs word of God, of common ſenſe, and the Weſtminſter aſſembly, did I not add,

7. That God's being the cauſe of volition does not infringe upon free agency, &c? Whether God is in the ſame immediate manner the cauſe of ſinful volitions, as he is of holy, I pretend not to ſay; for I know nothing about it. And perhaps it is what no mortal can ſafely either affirm or deny. But that God is, in ſome way or other, either mediately or immediately, the cauſe of all volitions, is as evident to me as that an effect infers a cauſe.

I think

I think it is generally allowed by Calviniſts, that God is the immediate cauſe of holy volitions. And who makes any complaint about free agency on that account? Is not man allowed to be a free agent, and God the cauſe of his agency in this caſe? Do we not allow that ſome men have good tempers or diſpoſitions? And do we think them the leſs praiſe-worthy becauſe theſe tempers were not ſelf-originated? Do we not venture to pronounce the man himſelf good; his temper or diſpoſition; and not barely ſay the cauſe was good? Do we not predicate virtue and praiſe-worthineſs on the benevolence of the agent, in diſtinction from the benevolence of the cauſe which produced it?

But why is there this partiality in arguing from effect to cauſe? Why do we ſay, in *one* inſtance, that it is inconſiſtent with free agency that God ſhould be the cauſe of volition, and, in *another*, readily admit him to be the cauſe of volition, and feel no difficulty about free agency? If he may in *one* inſtance be the cauſe of volition, without deſtroying the freedom of the agent, why not in *another?* Why is it not as neceſſary that holy volitions ſhould be ſelf-originated, in order to praiſe-worthineſs, as that ſinful ones ſhould, in order to criminality? But if we admit that moral agency is volition, and that all the virtue or vice, beauty or deformity, of volitions, can be found in them, will it not remove every difficulty? Will it not then fully appear, that God's being the cauſe of volition does not infringe upon free agency? For what is free agency, but volition or chooſing? And what is it to aſſert God to be the cauſe of volition, but aſſerting that he is the cauſe of free agency? And will any one complain of God's cauſing his creatures to act freely? Does not the chriſtian think himſelf indebted to God for making, or cauſing him to be, a free voluntary agent? And will he ſtill deny that God is the cauſe of volition, which alone is voluntary action, and without which he could not be a voluntary or free agent?

Some perhaps will ſay, volition is not a free action, if God be the cauſe of it. But what is this but ſaying, a thing cannot be what it in fact is, if God was a cauſe of its being ſo? Or that a perſon cannot be free in the exerciſe of freedom? And might we not as well ſay, motion cannot be motion, if it be produced by an extrinſick cauſe, or is not ſelf-originated?

If we ſuppoſe, as ſome do, that ſinful volitions are cauſed by a previous ſinful propenſity or diſpoſition; it is only like fleeing from one ſubterfuge to another, before an irreſiſtible foe. It gives a momentary relief, and that is all. For let us drive back as far as we will, theſe queſtions will unavoidably purſue. "Is there not a cauſe? and, What is the cauſe?" until we come to an eternal ſelf-exiſting cauſe.

I think it has become faſhionable to crowd back the ſinfulneſs of volition upon a calamitous ſinful diſpoſition; that diſpoſition upon the fall of Adam; and his fall upon the agency of the devil: And thus, inſtead of looking for criminality in that which is criminal, we ſeek for it in a cauſe; and, by this mean, place it at ſuch a diſtance from ourſelves as to feel very eaſy and unconcerned about it.

8. That men are not paſſive in volition, but active; they may be conſidered as efficients in volition; but not the *cauſe* of their own efficiency.

I meet no difficulty in agreeing with Mr. Murray, that "Every actual tranſgreſſion implies an exerciſe of the ſinner's will." But how nonentity or mere privation can rouſe, and work itſelf up into an actual tranſgreſſion, I ſubmit to Philoſophers and Metaphyſicians to illuſtrate.

I conceive we are efficients, wherever we are active. Volition is not an effect, which takes place without the conſent of the agent, or him that chooſeth. The ſuppoſition of an involuntary volition implies a contradiction in terms. We have a capacity for volition; but are not independent of an extrinſick diſpoſing cauſe.

Perhaps

Perhaps it will be ſaid, If we are ſo dependent that we cannot chooſe when we pleaſe, or have a mind to, then we have no liberty at all. But does not ſuch an objection imply a contradiction? Does it not ſuppoſe a perſon may have a mind or pleaſure when he has none, or that he has a mind or pleaſure when he has no mind or pleaſure? What is the difference between volition and the choice or pleaſure of the mind; or having a mind or will to chooſe, and chooſing? However dependent we are for our volitions, I believe there is nothing implied in it, that will abridge any perſon of chooſing when and what he pleaſes, or has a mind to; and conſequently no abridgment of moral liberty.

If we allow that our hearts are in the hand of the Lord; that he is the cauſe of free agency in us, and we the voluntary agents; ſhall we not find a conſiſtency in thoſe ſeeming contradictions in ſcripture, which repreſent God as hardening the hearts of ſinners, and their hardening their own hearts; of his turning them, and their turning themſelves? May they not all be true, in a literal ſenſe?

But in oppoſition to this, Mr. Murray teaches us, that "the agent is the cauſe of his own acts." (p. 29.)

If the agent be the cauſe of his own acts, I ſuppoſe he is either a *deſigning* or an *undeſigning* cauſe. If he is an *undeſigning cauſe* of his own volitions, can he be any more criminal or praiſe-worthy, than if ſome other being was the cauſe of them? Will any one be condemned or applauded for an undeſigned act? But if we ſay he is a deſigning cauſe of his own acts, what is that but ſaying one volition is the cauſe of another; or that a man chooſes to chooſe? And to bring the matter ſoon to a point, it may be aſked, What is the cauſe of the firſt volition of the agent? Here I apprehend ſome difficulty, unleſs we can ſuppoſe a volition prior to the firſt volition.

Preſident Edwards ſays, "The mind's being an elective cauſe, will only enable it to produce effects in conſequence of its

its elections, and according to them ; but cannot enable it to be the elective cauſe of all its own elections, becauſe that ſuppoſes an election before the firſt election."

The truth of the caſe I conceive to be this : God is the firſt and ſupreme cauſe of every action or event. Man is totally dependent on him, not only for his being, but for every faculty or power of action ; not only at his firſt exiſtence, but in every ſucceeding moment of his exiſtence. He cannot walk, ſpeak, think, or will, without divine aid and energy. Wherever the divine agency ceaſes, all motion ceaſes, whether mental or corporeal. I can no more believe that created agents are efficients of their own agency, than that they are efficients of their own exiſtence. Is it not as eaſy to conceive of beings ſtarting from nonentity into exiſtence, by their own efficiency, as of their originating motion in themſelves? Is not every motion we perceive an invincible evidence of a ſupreme eternal cauſe ? Does not common ſenſe conſtrain us to believe, that every motion we perceive was either eternal, or the effect of ſome extrinſick cauſe ? And as no motion can begin, without a prior motion to originate it, may not every motion be followed from effect to cauſe, until they all centre in the GREAT FIRST CAUSE, who muſt have been in motion from eternity, there being no prior motion to originate exerciſes in him ?*

Mr,

* It is thought the following Note, which appeared in a Sermon publiſhed by the Author, ſince the publication of his letter to Mr. Murray, may, with propriety, be introduced here.

" What is here advanced reſpecting the extent of divine agency, will probably wound the feelings of ſome pious chriſtians : For I charitably ſuppoſe there are many good people, who think that ſome events have taken place contrary to the original deſign of Jehovah, and independent of divine efficiency. That ſuch perſons may not fail of *ſeeing* and *feeling* the importance of the ſentiment which they oppoſe, the following things are propoſed for their ſerious conſideration.

1. " Whether

Mr. Murray allows, " that the power of *acting* is greater than that of mere exiſtence ; and requires greater exertion of energy

1. " Whether that by endeavouring to maintain that ſome things have taken place without divine efficiency, they do not implicitly give up the foundation of all religion, both *natural* and *revealed*, by giving up all the ground upon which we prove the exiſtence of a SUPREME ETERNAL GOD.

" To prove this fundamental doctrine, we have recourſe to theſe dictates of reaſon, That every thing which has a beginning, has a cauſe ; that no change can take place in any being or thing, without a cauſe ; that every cauſe, which is not eternal, is itſelf the effect of ſome prior cauſe ; that ſecondary cauſes are abſolutely dependent on a firſt cauſe for all their power to operate ; that the firſt cauſe muſt be eternal, becauſe it could not *begin* to exiſt, without a cauſe, and there could be no *prior cauſe* to give exiſtence to the *firſt cauſe*. Upon theſe principles it is that *the inviſible things of God, from the foundation of the world, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things which are made, even his* ETERNAL POWER AND GODHEAD. And on theſe principles we may infallibly prove the divine exiſtence, from any effect we can perceive, whether *external* or *internal* : From things which are *ſmall*, as well as from things which are *great* ; from the exiſtence of the ſmalleſt inſect, the ſhaking of a leaf, from a thought of the mind, or deſire of the heart, as well as from the whole material ſyſtem,

" But if I ſhould ſay, that one event, or one thing, may take place, independent of divine efficiency, who will venture to ſet the bounds where I may conſiſtently ſtop ; or draw for me the line of diſtinction between events which take place by divine efficiency, and thoſe which take place independent of God ? If one event may take place, without divine efficiency, why not two, ten, or ten thouſand ? And why may not all things be accounted for in the ſame manner ?

" He who can demonſtrate that one event has been produced without divine agency, will meet with no difficulty to invalidate every argument which can be advanced in proof of the being of a God. And he who denies the univerſality of divine operation, has not, that I can ſee, an inch of ground left, upon which he can conſiſtently diſpute an Atheiſt.

2. " The three following things will be granted by all judicious chriſtians, viz. That it is our duty to acknowledge the hand of God, either by gratitude or ſubmiſſion, in every favour we receive, and every affliction we ſuffer, by *divine providence* ; that many of our favours and afflictions

energy in the cauſe which produces it."* If ſo, he who can act independently, can exiſt independently. And if action may be ſelf-originated, exiſtence may with greater eaſe, "the power of action being greater than that of mere exiſtence."

I beg leave to adduce the joint teſtimony of the Preſbytery, of which Mr. Murray is one, with regard to ſelf-motion. To ſet forth the ſuperiour excellency, and nobler nature of the ſoul, to that of mere matter, they ſay, "And nobler we may venture to call it, ſince we find it capable of thought. Thought is evidently inconſiſtent with the nature of mere matter. All changes wrought in matter are only the motion of its atoms. All ſuch motions require a moving cauſe. If matter could produce motion in itſelf, then it could give exiſtence to a being quite new and foreign to itſelf. But whatever can do this, can create. Every ſuch cauſe muſt then be ſuppoſed a God."

Whether this paſſage does not imply that all ſouls are capable of ſelf-motion, of creating, and conſequently are Gods, I refer to better judges. But thus far they are explicit, that whatever can produce motion in itſelf, can create. And that every ſuch cauſe muſt be ſuppoſed a God. This ſhews the difficulty of ſelf-motion, in their view. I would not, however, have it underſtood that I ſuppoſe he who creates, orignated motion in himſelf. This I apprehend would be a denial of the eternity of his exiſtence.

Perhaps it will be ſaid, if creatures are ſo dependent on God that his agency is neceſſary to effect agency in them; if his efficiency is needful in every of their actions; then he is the only agent, and he only is praiſe or blame-worthy.

But

tions come, through the inſtrumentality of moral agents; and that we are incapable of looking into the hearts of men, to determine the nature of their deſigns, whether good or evil. Unleſs then, we believe that the hearts of *all men*, at *all times*, are in the hand of the Lord, and by him turned whitherſoever he will, muſt we not be forever at a loſs, whether to acknowledge the hand of God or not, in the favours we receive, and the afflictions we ſuffer, by the agency of our fellow creatures?"

* Page 20.

But does not this objection imply the very thing it denies, viz. That there are more agents than one, on ſuppoſition that God's agency is neceſſary to every action of his creatures? If action is produced in them, are they not agents in their own agency? When Chriſt cauſed the deaf to hear, the dumb to ſpeak, and the blind to ſee; who, ſhall we ſay, heard, ſpake and ſaw? He or they? The cauſe, or the ſubject acted upon? If to aſſert that God is the cauſe of agency in his creatures, implies that he is the only agent, then muſt we not ſay, it was Chriſt who heard, ſpake, &c. and not thoſe on whom he wrought the miracles of healing.?

With regard to volitions, I ſuppoſe they are as properly our own acts as if there was no other agent in the univerſe. Cannot God be the cauſe of my agency, without being the agent of my agency. Am not I as really an agent as he is? I a dependent, he an independent agent? Does that ſcripture which aſſerts the cauſe was of God, when Rehoboam rejected the counſel of the old men, imply that God was the agent who wickedly rejected their counſel?

I conceive that Rehoboam, and every other ſinner, is juſt as criminal as if they were the originating cauſes of all their own volitions. They are not to be blamed for the agency of the cauſe; nor for any thing but their own voluntary agency. We do not predicate the ſinfulneſs of volition on the agency of the cauſe, but on the volition itſelf; on our own agency.

And is it not an abſurdity to ſay, we predicate the ſinfulneſs of volition, on the cauſe which produces it? For when we ſpeak of the ſinfulneſs of volition, it implies that the volition is itſelf ſinful; but when we ſay the ſinfulneſs of volition is predicated on its cauſe, it implies that the volition is not itſelf ſinful, but only that its cauſe is ſinful. So, upon this footing, volitions are ſinful only by imputation; the ſin of the cauſe being imputed to the effect.

I ſee no more reaſon to ſuppoſe, that ſinful volitions muſt neceſſarily have a ſinful cauſe, than to ſuppoſe the calf, which

Aaron

Aaron made, was ſhaped juſt like himſelf; or that God, who made the gold of which Aaron made the calf, was alſo a golden God.

It will perhaps be ſaid that we do not predicate moral qualities, virtue or vice, on ſuch involuntary effects as gold and molten calves. And I am very ſenſible we do not. And the reaſon, I ſuppoſe to be this, they are not voluntary exerciſes. If, inſtead of gold, or a molten calf, had been produced a rational deſigning choice, ſhould we not look for moral beauty or deformity, virtue or vice, in the choice itſelf; juſt as we do for the properties of gold, in gold itſelf? We do not commonly inquire whether the properties of gold were in its cauſe, in order to eſtimate its value. If the properties are found in the effect, it is all that common ſenſe requires. And may not the ſame be ſaid of volition?

But if it is a juſt way of arguing, to infer the nature of the cauſe, from the nature of the effect, why do we not adopt it in other caſes? When we ſee a bear or wolf, why do we not ſay, their maker is a ravening voracious being? And when we ſee a ſerpent or viper, why do we not infer, that their cauſe was a ſpiteful venomous being? I preſume Mr. Murray would be ſhocked at ſuch inferences as theſe, although he ſays, "There can be no poſitive reality in the effect, which was not firſt in its cauſe," which I really think lays a foundation for ſuch inferences, and others too horrible and abſurd to mention.

Will not the foregoing obſervations help to remove another objection? It is ſaid, if evil is neceſſary to the greateſt good, and God is the cauſe of it, then he is chargeable with doing evil that good may come.

But if we predicate virtue or vice, on the nature of our volitions, we muſt on the nature of his. And if it be a good which he aims at, in cauſing evil, his volition is not evil, but good. The deſign of the ſinner may be oppoſite to the deſign of the cauſe, in the taking place of the ſame event. This is

evident

evident from ſcripture. "Ye thought evil againſt me; but, God *meant it* unto good." And this points out the difference immediately; for a good deſign only is virtue; and an evil deſign only is vice. And wherever we find them, whether in cauſe or effect, there we ſhould predicate praiſe or blame, and no where elſe.

"I believe," ſays Preſident Edwards, "there is no perſon of good underſtanding, who will venture to ſay, he is certain that it is impoſſible it ſhould be beſt, taking in the whole compaſs and extent of exiſtence, and all conſequences in the endleſs ſeries of events, that there ſhould be ſuch a thing as moral evil in the world. And if ſo, then ſuch a choice is not an evil choice, but a wiſe and holy choice."

Having thus illuſtrated my ideas, I ſhall conclude with a few obſervations.

1. I think it is very evident, that Mr. Murray's good ſenſe informed him, that if ſin be not a mere privation and nonentity, then God muſt be in ſome way or other the cauſe of it. (See p. 22.) And whether I have diſcovered any abſurdity in the ſentiment, or any inconſiſtency in his writings upon it, I now ſubmit to the impartial world. Perhaps I have only ſhewn myſelf inconſiſtent. But,

2. On ſuppoſition, that ſin is a mere privation, or nonentity, I do not ſee the pertinency of his argument from the nature of cauſation; granting it to be concluſive. For I cannot perceive that any cauſe is requiſite for the production, if I may ſo ſay, of nonentity. And upon his principles, when he aſſerts "that evil can never come from any other than an evil cauſe," what is it more than aſſerting that nonentity only can be the cauſe of nonentity, or that nothing but nothing can be the cauſe of nothing?

3. Mr. Murray ſuppoſes his opponents, to be conſiſtent, ſhould deny future puniſhment. But perhaps there is as much propriety in puniſhing for real voluntary evil, whatever may be the cauſe of it, as there is in puniſhing for nothing. And

if I miſtake not, there is a moſt perfect analogy between his definition of ſin, and a denial of any poſitive puniſhment. Is it not as eaſy to give a negative conſtruction to thoſe paſſages in ſcripture, which ſeem to import puniſhment, as to thoſe which reſpect criminality. And ſhall we not be obliged ſo to underſtand them, if we admit the definition? If the Judge of the world does right, will he not obſerve an exact proportion between crime and puniſhment? And if the crime be but mere privation, and nonentity, can the puniſhment be any thing more?

Some perhaps may think I ſtand juſtly indicted, by Mr. Murray, as an "adverſary to the truth," and a "bold blaſphemer;" but I hope, notwithſtanding, when the ſecrets of the heart are made manifeſt, to be acquitted, by an impartial Judge, who will not be biaſſed by this premature indictment. Loading opponents with ſuch illiberal epithets can have no good tendency. Nor could I have reconciled this conduct of Mr. Murray, to the principles of chriſtian candor and benevolence, had it not been for his negative definition of evil. But if we conſider that every word with him, importing criminality, muſt have a negative conſtruction, it may ſerve to qualify the epithets, and render them leſs harſh and grating. For what is implied, upon his ſentiments, in being an "adverſary to the truth," and a "bold blaſphemer," more than that a perſon is ſo perfectly indifferent with reſpect to God, that he has no poſitive exerciſes of heart either for or againſt him; and therefore ſays nothing about him one way or the other?

4. Mr. Murray queries, by way of objection, (p. 75,) "Is not the holy ſcripture full in aſſerting God to be the author of ſin?" And then replies, "No! but the reverſe in every reſpect." If by the word Author he means the agent or doer of evil, I can moſt cheerfully acquieſce; but if he only means the cauſe of that free agency, the inherent nature of which is moral evil, I think the ſcripture needs no comment

to

to oppoſe him. But if he ſtill retains his confidence in this aſſertion, I hope he will favour the world with a definition of the word *cauſe*, as it is uſed in the forementioned text reſpecting Rehoboam. For people of ordinary capacities will be puzzled to conceive how this, as well as many other texts, is in *every*, or *any* reſpect the reverſe of the ſentiment he oppoſes.

SUPPLEMENT

TO THE FOREGOING

REMARKS.

UPON reviewing the remarks in the preceding pages, and taking into conſideration with what readineſs Mr. Murray in his writings allows and treats of poſitively ſinful exerciſes, I was led to ſuſpect that he had ſome latent idea which I did not comprehend, couched under the terms "nonentity, or mere privation," and poſitively ſinful exerciſes. And after a critical reſearch to inveſtigate it, I came to the following conjecture, viz. That he ſuppoſes ſin, abſtractly conſidered, to be but mere privation of holineſs; but in the concrete, i. e. with its ſubject, a poſitive reality; that ſin is predicated upon a poſitive voluntary exerciſe of the ſinner, and conſiſts in want of holineſs; that in nature it is a *negative*, but in exerciſe, a *poſitive*.

The idea perhaps may be thus illuſtrated. Let blindneſs be ſuppoſed to conſiſt in the want of ſight, baldneſs in the want of hair, nakedneſs in the want of clothing, and deformity in the privation or want of beauty: Then, when we ſpeak of blindneſs, baldneſs, &c, in the abſtract, the ideas are privative, importing only the privation or want of their oppoſites, ſight, hair, clothing, or beauty; but when we ſay a blind, bald, naked or deformed perſon, here ſomething poſitive is implied. So when we ſpeak of ſin in the abſtract, it is ſuppoſed to import only the want of holineſs; but when we ſay a ſinful exerciſe, it implies a poſitive reality.*

I confeſs

* In conformity to what I conceived to be the imagination of ſome, I have ſpoken of blindneſs, baldneſs, &c. as though they might be conceived of

I confeſs I was much puzzled to comprehend his meaning; but if I have now obtained it, I ſhall ſpend no time in ſhewing the abſurdity which appears to me in the ſuppoſition of a poſitive volition or deſign, deſtitute of a poſitive nature;* but ſhall proceed to inquire whether this hypotheſis does not infer a poſitive cauſe for the production of evil; and conſequently remove one main pillar of Mr. Murray's diſcourſe.

It appears to me that his whole fabrick depends upon two pillars, for its ſupport, viz. his *principles of cauſation*, and his *negative definition of evil.*

1. He argues from the nature of cauſation *that God cannot be the cauſe of evil.* Why? Becauſe *there is no evil in him*, and "It is certain, ſays he, there can be no poſitive reality in the effect which was not firſt in its cauſe." Here it is obvious that his argument preſuppoſes, and takes for granted, that there is a *poſitive reality in evil*, otherwiſe what force or pertinency is there in the argument? But in the courſe of his arguments from the nature of cauſation, it ſeems that his philoſophy conſtrains him to acknowledge, that his "reaſoning fairly concludes that God is, and ever will be, the firſt cauſe of all real poſitive being." This being the caſe, a ſubterfuge or rearguard was needful. He then proceeds to give a definition of evil which is incompatible with the ſuppoſition of an efficient

of in the abſtract; but I ſcruple whether there is any human genius, ſufficient to form an idea of any of theſe things, otherwiſe than in the concrete. Let any one attempt to form an idea of blindneſs, or baldneſs, ſeparate from a blind or bald object, and he will perceive the difficulty immediately.

* If the word *ſin*, properly ſpeaking, imports no more than the privation of *holineſs*, is it not reaſonable to ſuppoſe the various terms by which we expreſs the different kinds of ſin, or the different modes of ſinning, likewiſe import only the privation or want of their oppoſites? But does *blaſphemy* imply no more than the want of a temper to *praiſe* and *honour* our Maker? Does *murder* imply no more than the want of that benevolent affection to our neighbour which the law requires? Does *curſing*, and wiſhing *eternal damnation* on our fellow-creatures, imply only the want of a heart to *bleſs* them and to *ſeek their eternal felicity?*

cient cauſe of its production: And from thence argues the abſurdity of ſuppoſing God to be the cauſe of it, in the following words, viz. "Unleſs therefore we would venture to ſay, that the Great Firſt Cauſe is a deficient cauſe, we may not go about to affirm that it required an exertion of his omnipotent energy to produce ſin; or that defect, nonentity, or mere privation, is the effect of divine creating might."

Theſe pillars ſeem to be placed one under the other for the ſecurity of the ſuperſtructure. The neceſſity of their being thus ſituated is obvious; for their oppoſition is ſuch they cannot ſtand in conjunction. For if ſin be a "mere privation," the argument from cauſation is without weight; and if there be a poſitive reality in it, the argument from privation is fallacious. And juſt as much weight as you allow to one, juſt ſo much you invalidate the other. But to return to the inquiry. What is the cauſe of *evil* upon this new hypotheſis, viz. That ſin is a mere privation, implying a poſitive exerciſe as its ſubject? It is evident, from the premiſes, 1. That all the deformity, turpitude or criminality of volition, conſiſts in its deſtitution of holineſs. 2. That all which can be denominated *poſitive* ſinfulneſs, is bare volition. So the only queſtion to be conſidered appears to be this, What is the cauſe of that poſitive ſubject, the voluntary exerciſe of the ſinner, upon which *moral evil* is predicated? This queſtion Mr. Murray has anſwered himſelf, in the paſſage juſt quoted, in which he owns that his "reaſoning fairly concludes that God is, and ever will be, the firſt cauſe of all *real poſitive being*."* Here I think

* Page 22. Leſt it ſhould be ſuſpected that I miſrepreſent Mr. Murray, I will tranſcribe the whole ſentence. "Although this reaſoning fairly concludes, that God is, and ever will be, the cauſe of all *real poſitive being*, and of all good, both natural and moral, in the univerſe, yet it will by no means follow that he is the author or cauſe of evil." To make the latter clauſe conſiſtent with the former, he introduces his negative definition of evil. But I have applied the former clauſe to nothing but what is confeſſedly a poſitive reality, viz. the poſitive volition or exerciſe of the ſinner.

I think is granted all that I have ſuppoſed in the foregoing pages. I have ſuppoſed God to be the cauſe of no evil, but by being the cauſe of volition or free action. As to the cauſe of the ſuppoſed negative part of criminality, that has not yet been the ſubject of my inquiry; and I ſcruple whether it ever will be. If I had not ſuppoſed moral evil to be included in a poſitive volition, which I could not conceive to be ſelf-originated, I ſhould not have ſuppoſed the Divine Being to be in any ſenſe the cauſe of it. I never thought of aſcribing to divine efficiency, ſuch a rare production as "nonentity, or mere privation." But it ever has been, and is ſtill, beyond me to conceive how any poſitive effect can come into exiſtence, otherwiſe than in a dependence upon the divine will and agency. But if Mr. Murray's own words are not a ſufficient anſwer to the queſtion under conſideration, I would refer the reader back to the illuſtration of the 6th, 7th, and 8th ideas, in the preceding pages.

The way and manner in which the divine efficiency is employed for the production of volition, I have no where attempted to ſhew. This is a matter which is not revealed: And I have endeavoured to keep within the compaſs of divine revelation. Beſides, I believe it to be altogether above human comprehenſion. But when God by his word expreſsly declares that, *The way of man is not in himſelf*; that *his goings are of the Lord*; that *in him we live and move and have our being*, I think myſelf bound to believe it, although I cannot comprehend the ways of the Spirit. I conceive it to be both arrogancy and preſumption to contradict the word of God, becauſe we cannot comprehend his works. From the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, I think I may juſtly infer, that volition or free action is produced in a way that is in no wiſe inconſiſtent with praiſe or blame, reward or puniſhment: And if I have not failed in my illuſtration of ideas, which reſpect moral agency, I think it is not very difficult to ſee the poſſibility and reaſonableneſs of it.

If

If there be any abſurdity or "blaſphemy," expreſſed or implied, in ſuppoſing God to be the cauſe of evil, in the ſenſe I have explained it, I moſt cordially wiſh to ſee it pointed out. At the ſame time, I muſt think it but a poor ſhift to deny the poſitive nature of ſin, and yet allow it to have a poſitive ſubject; and admit God to be the cauſe of the ſubject upon which evil is predicated, but not the cauſe of the evil which is predicated upon it. The abſurdity may perhaps more fully appear by alluding to a ſcripture metaphor: The potter makes a number of veſſels, ſome to honour, others to diſhonour; ſome beautiful, others deformed: The deformity of the latter, however, is ſuppoſed to conſiſt in the privation or want of beauty: The potter is the cauſe of the veſſel upon which deformity is predicated, but not the cauſe of deformity; becauſe that conſiſts in mere privation or want of beauty; which admits of no efficient cauſe. To apply the metaphor; God muſt be ſuppoſed the cauſe of the poſitive exerciſes upon which evil is predicated; but not the cauſe of the evil: For that conſiſts in "mere privation" or want of holineſs.

This I conceive to be a juſt illuſtration according to the conjecture: But whether I have hit right in that, is uncertain. And this uncertainty, perhaps, will be ſufficient to apologize for my publiſhing the remarks, which I had written previous to the conjecture, upon the negative definition of evil. The inſufficiency of Mr. Murray's "firſt principle," or pillar, I think was fairly ſhewn in the beginning of the preceding remarks; and if ſo, his ſcheme naturally falls upon the ſecond, viz. "Nonentity, or mere privation." A ſlender foundation for ſuch a ponderous ſuperſtructure! And notwithſtanding the ingenious evaſion which has been conſidered in this ſupplement, I humbly conceive, that when his diſcourſe is examined with philoſophical and theological ſtrictneſs, it will appear to have no better foundation than the houſe which was built on the ſand.

Mr.

Mr. Murray infinuates that his opponents have made but little uſe of ſcripture in defence of their ſide of the queſtion; the juſtice of which I ſubmit to impartial readers. Mr. Murray has indeed made ſome uſe of ſcripture. But for what purpoſe? Why, to prove what all his opponents readily grant, and conſtantly affirm, viz. that God is invariably good, that he does no evil, and cannot be tempted with it. If he had firſt proved it to be inconſiſtent with goodneſs to cauſe evil to take place, ſuch texts as he has produced would have been ſufficient to ſilence the controverſy. But this I think he has not done.

I have proceeded much further in a courſe of argumentation than I at firſt intended; and perhaps further than will be thought proper for one in my ſtation. I have, however, endeavoured to preſerve a conſiſtency in my remarks, with the title I have aſſumed, an *Impartial Inquirer:* But whether I have or not, others will judge. If I have, and Mr. Murray ſhould ſtill remain ſteadfaſt in the ſentiments he has publiſhed to the world, and ſhould condeſcend to reply to my remarks, I think I have a right to expect,

1. That he will ſhew how it can be otherwiſe than that "God is all things," and "all things are God," upon his hypotheſis, that "there can be no poſitive reality in the effect, which was not firſt in its cauſe."

2. That he will explain how the firſt evil that took place in the univerſe, could be the effect of an evil cauſe, i. e. of an evil prior to the firſt evil.

3. That he will demonſtrate, from ſcripture or reaſon, that moral evil is but "nonentity or mere privation."

4. That he will ſhew how it could be conſiſtent with divine goodneſs to permit evil to take place, on ſuppoſition that it was not "neceſſary for the greateſt good of the univerſe and the greateſt glory of God."

5. That he will explain how the divine character may be vindicated from the charge of ſinful deficiency, on his ſuppoſition,

" That infinite wiſdom and power" do not " chooſe and do the very beſt at all times that they can."

6. That he will demonſtrate the conſiſtency of ſuppoſing that God willed to permit ſin, without willing it to be.

7. That he will ſhew his authority for giving a negative conſtruction to the plain and poſitive declarations of the UNERRING SPIRIT.

8. That he will, in a friendly manner, point out wherein I have erred, in what I have written, from the *faith once delivered to the ſaints*..

The point I have attended to claims ſuch affinity with the divine character, that every chriſtian muſt feel intereſted in the cauſe: And no pains which may be taken, can equal the importance of a right underſtanding of it. A great degree of charity, candour and impartiality are requiſite in controverting a point ſo delicate. It is an eaſy matter to raiſe a hue-and-cry of *hereſy*, *blaſphemy*, and *damnable doctrine*, againſt almoſt any performance whatever: And this is often accepted as invincible proof of the fallacy of a ſentiment, and has a moſt pernicious influence on the minds of thoſe who chooſe rather to take their ſentiments from their teacher, than to be at the pains of examining whether *theſe things are ſo*. I am ſorry that I have had occaſion to take notice of any thing in Mr. Murray's diſcourſe, which it is difficult to reconcile to that charity which ſeeketh not her own. The harſh epithets of " bold blaſphemer," and " adverſary to the truth," are hard to be borne by any one who feels a friendly attachment to the divine character, and the cauſe of truth and righteouſneſs. I doubt not but Mr. Murray's ſentiments appear to me as irreconcilable to the word of God, as the ſentiments he was oppoſing did to him: But I cannot think, were I his equal, that it would be for the honour of God, or the advantage of truth, for me to adopt his method to ſhew the abſurdity of them. I have indeed, once or twice, in the foregoing and ſubſequent remarks,

adopted

adopted a lower degree of his terrifying language; not becauſe I have any delight in it; but I thought it reaſonable that he ſhould have the advantage of ſeeing ſome of his *ſevere* rhetorick in the retorted mode. May HE whoſe honour is concerned, give us an impartial ſpirit, and guide us into all truth.

APPENDIX.

THERE are ſome things in Mr. Murray's diſcourſe, which I think are worthy of particular attention, reſpecting abſolute ſovereignty and ſubmiſſion. p. 46, 47, 48, 52, 53, 54.

1. We are taught that "God acted from mere abſolute ſovereignty from eternity;" and that "In giving being, he acted the abſolute ſovereign in the higheſt ſenſe."

2. That after creation, "No more then can he be conſidered as acting towards creatures once made, merely in the light of an abſolute ſovereign." Again, "When we ſpeak of the ſovereignty of God, then in any acts done ſubſequent to creation, we ought to mean not arbitrary pleaſure, abſtracted from all reaſon or rule." To enforce this, he quotes Dr. Edwards, who ſays, "Sovereignty, ſeparated from all reſpect to goodneſs, is no idea of God; but of ſome mercileſs tyrant rather; yea, of the ſpirit of darkneſs, that ſtrong armed man; but power and ſtrength, guided by goodneſs and holineſs, are truly heavenly and divine."

3. We are told that "Whatever is fixed on as the primary idea of God, all things muſt be ſo explained as to be conſiſtent with that." "The ſovereignty already mentioned, is fixed on by ſome. Accordingly, the whole of their experimental religion, ſeems to be reſolved into abſolute ſubmiſſion to abſolute ſovereignty, and conſtant rejoicing in its reign." But for the conſolation of him who has no evidence of this ſubmiſſion, Mr. Murray ventures to ſay, "No ſuch object of worſhip being ſet up in the Bible, he may reſt aſſured that no ſuch

ſuch being rules the univerſe. Far from aſſuming the character of abſolute ſovereignty, divested of every thing elſe, the glorious JEHOVAH is there propoſed to us as an infinite, eternal, all-perfect ſpirit, poſſeſſing, in boundleſs perfection, the attributes of mercy, love, and goodneſs; of wiſdom, power, and holineſs; of truth, juſtice and righteouſneſs, as the eſſentials of his nature. In obedience and ſubmiſſion to ſuch a character, the duty and happineſs of every rational creature lie; and to the truly rational every ſuch act will give the moſt refined delight. But ſovereignty, to be abſolute, muſt be ſeparated from all theſe; and to rejoice in the government of ſuch a being, is impoſſible to reaſon: Indeed, to ſuch a being no ſubmiſſion is due: None ſuch did ever fill the celeſtial throne. If, inſtead of this ideal ſovereign, they would put the ſceptre into the hands of a ſupreme ruler, whoſe will is ever comformed to his own eternal reaſon, and incapable of deviating from the moral perfections of his nature, all right minds will join them in rejoicing in his reign."

Query 1. By what authority does Mr. Murray ſo peremptorily aſſert, that God was ſeparated from the attributes of "mercy, love, goodneſs," &c. until after the work of creation? "Sovereignty, ſays he, to be abſolute, muſt be ſeparated from all theſe;" yet "God acted from mere abſolute ſovereignty from eternity;" and "in giving being, God acts the abſolute ſovereign in the higheſt ſenſe."

Query 2. How often does the phraſe, "abſolute ſovereignty," ſhift its meaning? In one place we find the GLORIOUS DEITY acting in that character; but in writing a few pages, the character becomes ſo odious that "none ſuch did ever fill the celeſtial throne." Words thus changeable, I think, ought not to be uſed. For although we may be aſſured in one place, that the MOST HIGH is thereby characterized; the diſtance of a few pages may render it uncertain, whether he is again meant, or his adverſary the *devil*, clothed in the ſame livery.

Whether

Whether Mr. Murray intended it or not, his own heart and the day of judgment will determine; but from the manner of his introducing and treating the doctrine of ſovereignty and ſubmiſſion, his readers have been led to ſuppoſe, that he meant to repreſent, that ſome perſons, who cannot adopt his ſentiments upon the "*Origin of Evil*," make abſolute ſubmiſſion to a "mercileſs tyrant" the higheſt duty. But who are they? Who are the perſons that repreſent God as a "mercileſs tyrant," and then urge the duty of abſolute ſubmiſſion? Do the following deſcriptions of ſovereignty, the requirements of God, and the duty of his creatures, juſtify the inſinuation?

"Truſting in the Lord, implies entire ſubmiſſion to his will. For God is a ſovereign. By the ſovereignty of God is not meant, if the obſervation is neceſſary, that he is a capricious unreaſonable being. For the thought is not admiſſible, that he ever acts, but under the guidance of infinite wiſdom, and the influence of infinite goodneſs. God is perfect in his nature and adminiſtrations. He is infinitely wiſe to diſcern what is beſt; he is infinitely good to chooſe what is beſt; and he is infinitely powerful. He muſt, therefore, from the infinite perfection of his nature, adopt and execute the beſt poſſible plan. Thoſe, therefore, who have any proper acquaintance with the conſummate excellency of his character, muſt neceſſarily truſt him without reſerve. They chooſe that God ſhould give them more or leſs health, as he ſees fit; that he ſhould ſet the bounds of life, and order all the circumſtances of death; they poſſeſs nothing, not excepting their immortal ſouls, but what they freely commit to him; becauſe he is infinitely perfect."

One ſays, "As God ever loves himſelf ſupremely, not becauſe the object is himſelf, but becauſe he is God; and all his rational creatures in a perfectly juſt degree, without any partial reſpect to *me*, becauſe the object is *myſelf*: And as he ſeeks *his* intereſt, and the intereſt of his creatures, not from

any

any partial reſpect to *their* intereſt or his *own*; but becauſe they are, ſo far as he ſeeks them, the *common* intereſt: And as he is fully diſpoſed to improve all things, himſelf not excepted, in juſt ſuch a manner as is moſt conducive to the higheſt good of the univerſe: So he requires us to love him, with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourſelves; without any partial reſpect to any perſon or intereſt; and to be fully diſpoſed to have that very uſe made of all things, ourſelves not excepted, which ſhall beſt promote the higheſt good of the whole."*

Theſe

* This paragraph, I conceive, will give a juſt view of what Mr. Murray calls "The ingenious diſcovery that creatures ought not to deſire their own felicity, or wiſh to eſcape eternal miſery;" and alſo of moſt of his practical conſequences. And the others appear to me ſo groundleſs and extraordinary, that but few impartial and judicious readers will be ſcrupulous of their deſign.

I believe, however, that Mr. Murray was not the firſt who inferred horrible and terrifying conſequences from the ſentiment he oppoſes. The holy Apoſtles, I conceive, preached the ſame doctrine; and ſome, we are informed, ventured to affirm that they ſaid, "Let us do evil, that good may come."

The quotations from the "reſult of a venerable council," no one will think it incumbent on me, either to vindicate or condemn. I will only obſerve,

1. That it is poſſible what Mr. Murray has marked as quotations, might appear in a different light, in the connexion they were firſt uſed, from what they do now, however upright the venerable council or Mr. Murray may have been in the repreſentation. Miſunderſtanding often occaſions miſrepreſentation.

2. From the allowed principles of fallibility, it is poſſible that the gentleman referred too, expreſſed himſelf inadvertently and imprudently. Beſides,

3. If Mr. Pope has been injured, is it not poſſible that this gentleman has received ſomewhat ſimilar treatment?

4. However it may be with reſpect to the propriety of the ſentiment, which Mr. Murray oppoſes in his marginal note, p. 97, I think his argument to prove the impoſſibility of being willing to be damned for the glory of God, ſtands upon a very ſlender foundation. He ſays, "The

damnation

Theſe paſſages contain the *ſum* of what I have ever diſcovered in the writings of thoſe who are ſuppoſed to be particularly aimed at in Mr. Murray's diſcourſe, with reſpect to *ſovereignty* and *ſubmiſſion*. And if there be any thing of the "*mercileſs tyrant*," either expreſſed or implied, I wiſh to ſee it pointed out.

Mr. Murray ſeems perfectly to agree with theſe Authors, that ſubmiſſion is due to the "all-perfect Spirit," who rules the univerſe. For he ſays, "In obedience and ſubmiſſion to ſuch a character, the duty and happineſs of every rational creature

damnation here ſuppoſed to be choſen, is either juſt or unjuſt: *If the former*, then to chooſe this, is to chooſe to diſhonour him by ſinning here, in order to deſerve a puniſhment, in which we ſhall do all we can to diſhonour him in ſuffering forever." Here I apprehend ſomething is taken for granted, which is not eaſily proved, viz. that ſinners have not diſhonoured God enough already, to deſerve puniſhment, ſo but that to be willing to be puniſhed, they muſt chooſe to diſhonour him, by ſinning, in order to deſerve it. When Mr. Murray has proved this perhaps the gentleman he has cenſured will be ready to anſwer for himſelf.

5. With reſpect to being "ſorry for the worſt crimes," it is very poſſible and very probable to me, from the information I have had, that the ſentiment is miſrepreſented: Whether deſignedly or not, I pretend not to ſay. If there be no difference between being ſorry for our ſins, and being ſorry, on the whole, that thoſe events have taken place; then I ſuppoſe the ſentiment is fairly repreſented, and not otherwiſe. But in my view there is a wide difference. Might not thoſe Jews who were guilty in crucifying the Saviour of the world, be ſorry for their wicked and abominable deſigns; and not, on the whole, be ſorry that Chriſt, by their wicked hands, had been crucified and ſlain; while they conſidered that they had done what God's hand and counſel had determined before to be done? For them to be ſorry, on the whole, that the event of their wicked conduct had taken place, would imply, that they were ſorry that God's wiſe and holy deſigns were accompliſhed. The ſalvation of ſinners as really depended on that conduct of the Jews, as it did on the death and ſufferings of Chriſt, which were thereby effected; and therefore for them to be ſorry, on the whole, for the exiſtence of that event, they muſt, on the whole, be ſorry for the ſalvation of ſinners, and the diſplays of divine glory in conſequence thereof.

ture lie." The difference ſeems not to be with regard to the duty of ſubmiſſion; but only with reſpect to the object to whom they would ſubmit: And not with regard to what he is now; but what he was previous to creation, and in giving being.

But if the gentlemen Mr. Murray oppoſes, have been in an error, in ſuppoſing that God was juſt as good, holy and righteous, wiſe and powerful, from eternity, and in giving being, as he is now in governing the world; would it not have been better if he had written ſomething to ſhew them their miſtake, than to have taken the advantage of their ignorance on this point, to repreſent them as worſhipping ſuch an obnoxious "mercileſs tyrant," as he ſeems to ſuppoſe the Moſt High was, antecedently to creation?

But is not this a ſolemn affair? Is it not truly aſtoniſhing that Mr. Murray ſhould ſo repreſent the ſentiments of his opponents? But why do I mention any injury done to fellow worms? What is that in compariſon to the injury done to the *divine character?* Can chriſtians, who confide in the immutability of divine goodneſs, ever believe that "God acted from mere abſolute ſovereignty from eternity," in Mr. Murray's ſenſe of the phraſe? Can they believe that in deviſing the glorious plan of redemption, in ordaining a future ſtate of retribution, and in determining the veſſels of mercy and wrath; I ſay can they believe that in theſe things God was ſeparated from the attributes of "mercy, love, and goodneſs; from wiſdom, power, and holineſs;" and acted like a "mercileſs tyrant," "abſtracted from all reaſon and rule?" And can they believe that "in giving being" God acts the abſolute ſovereign in the higheſt ſenſe; i. e. in the higheſt ſenſe, like a "mercileſs tyrant," and *that* without "*wiſdom*" or "*power?*" Can they think this is characteriſtick of the *Father of lights, in whom is no variableneſs or ſhadow of turning?* But when they farther conſider, that they are taught, by "a man of education in his ſenſes," to believe, not only this;

but alſo, in one breath, that " God acted from mere abſolute ſovereignty from eternity ;" and in another, that *no ſuch being ever filled the celeſtial throne ;* will they not be ready to adopt Mr. Murray's language, and ſay, " We are ſtruck with no leſs aſtoniſhment at the capacity of the human mind for ſwallowing contradiction, than horror at the article which completes the odium attempted to be thrown on the character of the HOLY ONE of Iſrael ! ! !"

It is needleſs, I apprehend, to enlarge, to ſhew the abſurdity and contradiction of what Mr. Murray has written upon this point. I cannot think that in the cool of the day he will avow the ſentiment, which in the heat of his zeal againſt his opponents, he has exhibited to the world : But unleſs he ſhould think the abſurdity ſo flagrantly manifeſt, that there is no danger that any one will be miſled ; can he, upon principles of uprightneſs, refrain from a publick retraction ?

The manner in which Mr. Murray has treated his opponents, with reſpect to abſolute ſovereignty and ſubmiſſion, and alſo in ſome other inſtances, has often forced on my mind, the following obſervations of Dr. Watts. But whether they are applicable to any part of his diſcourſe, the impartial will determine.

" Diſputers," ſays he, " when they grow warm, are ready to run into this fallacy. They dreſs up the opinion of their adverſary as they pleaſe, and aſcribe ſentiments to him, which he doth not acknowledge ; and when they have, with a great deal of pomp, attacked and confounded theſe images of ſtraw, of their own making, they triumph over their adverſary, as though they had utterly confuted his opinion."

" It is a fallacy of the ſame kind which a diſputer is guilty of when he finds that his adverſary is too hard for him, and that he cannot fairly prove the queſtion propoſed : He then with ſlyneſs and ſubtlety turns the diſcourſe aſide to ſome other kindred point, which he can prove, and exults in that

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new argument, wherein his opponent never contradicted him." Logick, b. 3. c. 3. §. 1.

Notwithſtanding the freedom I have uſed in my remarks, I think that I can ſay, with uprightneſs, that I have no deſire to prejudice any perſon's mind againſt Mr. Murray. I wiſh his diſcourſe and my remarks may have an impartial examination, and that each of them may ſtand or fall according to their merit.

I eſteem Mr. Murray to be a man of great and improved abilities, capable of doing much good as a Miniſter of the goſpel. But neither the moral character of a man, whether bad or good, nor his natural or acquired abilities, whether ſmall or great, ſhould have any influence on our minds, in determining the propriety or fallacy of his ſentiments. For bad men may reaſon with accuracy and propriety; the feeble-minded may have ſome good ideas; good men may err; and GREAT MEN ARE NOT ALWAYS WISE.

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